

***- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Scheduled Zero Hearings in New York -***

Goshen, NY – U.S. Rep. John Hall (D-NY19) wrote to the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) today to request a public hearing in New York related to the Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment for the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge. A significant expansion of the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge has been proposed throughout the New York and New Jersey portions of the refuge. While two public hearings were scheduled in New Jersey as part of the USFWS's study process, none were scheduled in New York.

"It is imperative that New York communities severely impacted by flooding from the Walkill are provided with ample opportunity to make their views heard, and I believe that the current hearing plan does not fully accomplish this goal," wrote Congressman Hall to USFW Director H. Dale Hall. "In order to remedy this situation, I urge you to schedule an additional public hearing in New York prior to the closing of the public comment period on March 10, 2008."

The USFWS has identified additional areas surrounding the current boundaries of the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge as "biologically significant land" in its Land Protection Plan. In Orange County, parts of Minisink and the Black Dirt Region of Warwick have been proposed for acquisition.

"Local farmers and members of the New York communities surrounding the Wallkill River have been deeply affected by flooding of the River," said Hall. "The Fish and Wildlife Service needs to hold a public hearing in New York to listen to the concerns of residents and area farmers."